

Almighty God, Sovereign of history, we praise You for the courage that You gave to Christopher Columbus over five centuries ago. Grant us an explorer's heart, intent on discovering and doing Your will. Overcome our fears; give us hope and vision. May we press on in spite of the cautious voices that would distract us from our calling to follow Your voice. As Columbus followed Your vision, help us to be faithful and obedient to Your vision for our Nation. Through our Lord and Savior. Amen.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The able majority leader, Senator LOTT of Mississippi, is recognized.

Mr. LOTT. I thank the Chair.

SCHEDULE

Mr. LOTT. This afternoon, the Senate will begin a period of morning business. Following morning business, the Senate will consider any legislation that may be cleared by unanimous consent only. It is expected that the House will send over a 2-day continuing resolution that will keep the Government operating until midnight Wednesday. That will allow us to continue our negotiations on the omnibus appropriations bill.

I can report that we have been meeting, of course on Sunday afternoon, and we have been meeting this morning, and we are back in sessions now between the House, the Senate and the administration. I think some progress is being made. It is, as most negotiations of this type, forward two, back one. A lot of the appropriations work has been done. We are now talking about language problems and also beginning to consider the supplemental appropriations final composition.

As a reminder to all Members, it is hoped that the remaining legislation of the 105th Congress can be cleared by unanimous consent. However, if a roll-call vote is needed on the omnibus bill, all Members will be given ample notice in order to plan their schedules accordingly. It would appear to me at this time that there probably would not be—well, there will not be any recorded votes on any subject other than the omnibus bill, and that it may not occur until sometime Wednesday. We would look at the possibility of Wednesday morning, but it could be Wednesday afternoon. I think it will be a physical situation at that time, just physically getting the work done and allowing everybody to review it to make sure it is as we had agreed it would be. If there develops here in the next 3 or 4 hours the possibility that there could be a final vote Tuesday afternoon late, we

will immediately notify all Members. But it appears that if a vote is required, it will probably be sometime during the day Wednesday, at least as things now stand.

I thank my colleagues for their patience and their assistance.

1999—THE YEAR OF AVIATION

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, despite the fact that the Senate passed S. 2279, the Wendell H. Ford National Air Transportation System Improvement Act of 1998, it looks like next year will be the year for aviation. This is disappointing, since S. 2279 promised to bring much needed air service to underserved communities throughout the Nation—a promise that will be delayed.

The first session of the 106th Congress should prove to be an important year for our Nation's air passengers. My top aviation policy priority remains to increase regional jet competition and flight service to smaller markets. Most Americans do not live in "Hub" cities and thus do not benefit from the range of choices and concentration of air service options. I look forward to working with my colleagues, on both sides of the aisle, and on the Commerce Committee to insure that rural and underserved communities receive adequate air transportation with improved flight service and more affordable airline tickets.

Commerce Committee Chairman MCCAIN has been a tremendous help. He understands the needs of underserved markets, and fully appreciates that adequate and affordable air service is a vital economic development issue for smaller cities. He too wants to improve the quality and quantity of flights originating from smaller airports. He gets it. I look forward to working with the chairman to build upon the principles set forth in the Ford Act.

Senator SLADE GORTON of Washington, chairman of the Subcommittee on Aviation, has provided pivotal guidance and has been instrumental in bringing focus to the many aspects of aviation. His inclusive and enthusiastic approach has engaged all who work with him.

Additionally, Senator BILL FRIST proved to be a great asset and a very effective advocate for the rural aviation community during this past session. His hard work brought small and underserved communities closer to receiving much needed public policy changes for flight service improvements. I look forward to looking with him in the next Congress to insure that small town America's aviation interests are met.

Aviation policy always affects the management and administration of local airports. Mr. Dirk Vanderleest of

the Jackson International Airport is one outstanding Mississippi airport director that counseled me on the needs of small and under served markets. His wisdom is cherished, and his efforts to push Mississippi's aviation priorities are appreciated.

Mr. Gene Smith of the Golden Triangle Regional Airport in Columbus also counseled me on Mississippi's aviation needs. He served as a member of the National Civil Aviation Review Commission and distinguished himself as a supporter for regional jet air transportation. I hope the recommendations made by Mr. Smith and the other Commissioners are not overlooked in the next Congress. I look forward to his continued input in our Nation's future aviation policy discussions.

Next year will be a watershed year for aviation policy. Quality air service for all Americans should be the focus of any aviation legislation. Quality air service is good for economic development, and it is good for Americans in the 21st Century.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COATS). Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business.

The Senator from Massachusetts, under the previous order, has 15 minutes.

Mr. KENNEDY. I thank the Chair.

COLUMBUS DAY

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I wish to pay tribute to the Chaplain for his very fine prayer in opening the Senate today. I think Christopher Columbus would be proud of us. We are doing the business of the Nation that he discovered, and we honor Italian Americans today for all of their contributions.

I don't think there is a place in the Nation where the cause for celebration is more lively or more deeply felt than in my State of Massachusetts, where sons and daughters of Italian immigrants have made such an extraordinary contribution in so many different aspects of life. We honor those brave Italian Americans who faced the seas and struggled for their existence, for their deep-seated commitment to family and to their religion and for their sense of optimism and hope in coming here to the United States. I think we honor them best by being about the business of working families today on Columbus Day and in the final hours of this Congress.

Mr. President, I would like to reserve about the last minute and a half of my time, if I might.